

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCS-06 CA-01 HA-05 L-03 H-01 PPT-01
SS-15 NSC-05 SP-02 PM-05 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00
/065 W

-----057340 191748Z /40

R 191355Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1439
INFO AMCONSUL DHAHRAN
USLO RIYADH

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: CARR
SUBJ: ESCAPE OF AMERICAN PRISONERS

REF: (A) JIDDA 2076 (NOTAL), (B) JIDDA 2077 (NOTAL)

1. REFTELS REPORTED ESCAPE OF TWO AMCIT PRISONERS FROM ROYAL
SAUDI AIR FORCE BASE ON 18 MARCH 1978. THEY WERE BEING HELD FOR
ALLEGED MANUFACTURE AND SALE OF ALCOHOL (PRESUMABLY TO SAUDI

NATIONALS, AMONG OTHERS). THEY HAD BEEN ARRESTED IN SEPTEMBER
1977.

2. ACCUSED WERE PILOTS IN SAUDI ARABIA UNDER CONTRACT. IN
JANUARY, THREE MORE SUCH PILOTS WERE ARRESTED ON SIMILAR CHARGES.
THE TWO WHO HAVE NOW ESCAPED WERE HELD IN A SMALL COTTAGE
(PERHAPS FORMER OFFICER OF THE GUARD OFFICE, SINCE IT IS
IMMEDIATELY ADJACENT TO AIR BASE ENTRY GATE) LATTER GROUP
WERE HELD IN REGULAR BASE PRISON ALONG WITH SAUDI AND
OTHER PRISONERS.

3. IN REPORTING ESCAPE TO EMBASSY ON MORNING OF 19 MARCH
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BASE ADJUTANT GENERAL HASHIM NABULSI INFORMED US THAT
AMCITS ARRESTED IN FUTURE WOULD NO LONGER BE GIVEN
"FAVORED TREATMENT", BUT WOULD BE TREATED LIKE ALL OTHER
PRISONERS.

4. COMMENT: THIS INCIDENT AND NABULSI'S REACTION HAVE
ONLY UNDERSCORED "LAW AND ORDER" SITUATION EMBASSY, USLO

AND CONGEN DHAHRAN HAVE BECOME INCREASINGLY AWARE OF. CONSERVATIVE SAUDI REACTION TO EVER-INCREASING NUMBER OF FOREIGNERS (NOT JUST AMERICANS), HAS BROUGHT INCREASINGLY STRICT APPLICATION OF SAUDI LAW TO ALLEGED TRANSCRESSORS. THIS INCLUDES STIFFER SENTENCES ALL AROUND, INCLUDING MANDATORY LASHING IN CERTAIN CASES REGARDLESS OF FACT CONVICTED PERSON IS NOT MOSLEM. WHILE WE WILL CONTINUE URGE SAG AUTHORITIES GIVE DUE CONSIDERATION TO CULTURAL DIFFERENCES WHICH LEAD AMERICAN RESIDENTS INTO SOME OF THEIR DIFFICULTIES WITH SAUDI LAW AND PLEAD WHEN NECESSARY FOR CLEMENCY WHEN SENTENCES SEEM UNDULY HARSH BY AMERICAN STANDARDS, WE MUST FACE UP TO FACT THAT WE ARE LIKELY TO HAVE TO MEET INCREASING FAMILY, MEDIA AND CONGRESSIONAL CONCERN ABOUT THE LOT OF AMERICANS WHO RUN AFOUL OF SAUDI LAW.

5. WE TAKE SOME GRATIFICATION FROM FACT THAT WHILE WE ARE SELDOM, IF EVER, INFORMED OF AMCIT ARRESTS (JIDDA 1143), AUTHORITIES WERE COMMENDABLY SWIFT IN REPORTING ESCAPE.
WILEY

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Message Attributes

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